

Confronting Racial Injustice Conference — Workshop Summary

Date: 1/24/2020

Workshop Title: Social Work Must be Anti-Racist Work

Presenter: Jacob Hanifl

Speaker Bio:

Jacob Hanifl is a Social Worker in the Sun Prairie Area School District, supporting students in the 6th through 9th grades. Jacob has worked in the School District of Beloit, as well as Madison Metropolitan School District where he fulfilled the role of expulsion social worker. Jacob earned his B.S. in Sociology from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse and his MSW from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Jacob lives in the Madison area with his partner Debie, a fellow Social Worker. Jacob's daughter Porsha is a freshman at Morgan State University in Baltimore, MD; an HBCU. Jacob's philosophy rests in a quote by James Baldwin, "The paradox of education is precisely this – that as one begins to become conscious one begins to examine the society in which he is being educated."

Workshop Description:

Jacob Hanifl will be discussing with workshop attendees how our Code of Ethics requires us to anti-racist work. Using the definition, borrowed by Ibram X. Kendi, of "racist" and "anti-racist", we will isolate race and check our beliefs. We will be asking ourselves why racist ideas, policies, and practices exist in our agencies, if we are living up to our Code of Ethics. I will be sharing with attendees about techniques and skills used to advocate for just policies and practices and share how we are protected in doing this work. Activities during the workshop will include: Turn & Talks; Share Outs; Word Clouds – via text from participants; and, a quick read

Summary:

Social workers are ethically bound by the NASW code of ethics to uproot racism within the systems and institutions in which they work. In addition, social workers must incorporate an anti-racist approach into their practice. According to Ibram X. Kendi, an anti-racist is a person who supports anti-racist policies through their actions or expressing an antiracist idea. Additionally, an anti-racist expresses the idea that racial groups are equals, while supporting policy that reduces racial inequity. To accomplish this, social workers must center and isolate race (specifically the struggles of African Americans and Indigenous Americans) at the epicenter of their practice. Through this, social workers can get to the heart of systemic racism, while also tackling the wide range of intersectional issues people face.

Unfortunately, social workers who are most adamant about racial equity are often cast to the margins of institutional culture, as colleagues call them troublemakers for naming what others refuse to name. Moreover, some are accused of being too 'political' simply for pointing out conditions that harm families of color.

Nevertheless, because social workers are ethically obligated to promote social justice and social change with and on behalf of clients, they are ethically and legally protected by the NASW code of ethics and [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission \(EEOC\)](#) to perform anti-racist work. As a result, social workers should feel empowered to challenge racist policies and practices within their practice setting.

Strategies for Action:

- Isolate and center race at the epicenter of your social work practice.
- Move from indoctrination to education - The difference between education and indoctrination is that education opens the mind, while indoctrination closes it.
- Review NASW code of ethics to improve and inform your understanding about the obligation social workers have to be anti-racist.
- Become acquainted with the protections social workers have under the [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission \(EEOC\)](#) to perform anti-racist work.
- Continuously act in an anti-racist fashion by calling out racist policies and practices. To be anti-racist you must act, not wait for someone else to pick up the mantle.
- White anti-racist social workers should speak out about racial injustice, regardless if it's uncomfortable, and not wait for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) to do all the anti-racist work.